

imagination must be affected in the one case with the sublime, the beautiful, the pathetic—with “thoughts that breathe and words that burn”; and in the other, the heart must feel and love the excellencies of virtue. It is not enough to know the words of the poem or the names of the virtues: these may be repeated without any just conception of their signification. Now, this applies most emphatically to revealed religion. It is a science that engages the heart, the tastes, and the affections, as well as the understanding. Its terms refer to these, and cannot well be explained to a man who does not feel the one and observe the other. A man, wholly engrossed with selfishness, must have only an obscure idea of disinterested love and universal benevolence; and equally obscure must his notions be of purity of heart, of devout affections, or of any spiritual excellence whatever, whose soul is distracted and lorded over by unholy passions, whose desires are wholly fixed upon sensible objects, and whose mind is so much tossed about in dissipation, that it has no opportunity of communing with itself and reflecting on spiritual things. “For the natural man receiveth not the things of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” And this impossibility of understanding spiritual things would remain to a man under the dominion of sense and appetite although all spiritual things were as baseless as the fictions of poetry. It rests not solely in the natural abstruseness of the things, but in the unsuitness of his gross and animal nature to discern them. It is to be expected, therefore, that the higher we advance in moral attainment—in holiness of heart and life, the more clear will our knowledge be of moral and divine science; and especially of that revelation whose principal design is to raise that sordid standard of moral virtue which reason might form, and to elevate our conceptions and sentiments to a resemblance with the mind that was in Christ.

But besides this general purity of heart and life, an humble, teachable, and impartial spirit, is necessary to qualify all men for the successful study of revealed truth. When men come to the scriptures with minds full of the knowledge that puffeth up, they are in no fit temper to study the religion of Christ; for such men are too wise to be instructed. They imagine that they have already found out a standard of truth, and that nothing which is inconsistent with their preconceived opinions, can be truth. It is no great wonder that such should not acknowledge the word of God to be even a cunningly devised fable, for it is very unlike any of the cunning fictions that human genius has

devised. If such men are disposed to apply their square and compass to the Bible, as they would to an epic poem or system of mathematics, they will be sure to find it out in all its proportions. It surely becomes men of the greatest talents and acquirements to have a diffidence of their own understandings in examining subjects of which they have had no experience, and with which they have nothing wherewithal to compare them; and many of the subjects of the christian revelation are, as might have been expected, of this nature. It is not meant by this, that humility is to be considered as synonymous with weakness, or inattention, or credulity of mind. Let every energy and resource of reason be employed; but let it also be remembered that reason has its province, beyond which, it cannot, without great presumption and danger, extend its inquiries. Its proper province is to examine the evidence on which the Bible claims to be a divine revelation; and after having ascertained that it is from God, to listen to its instructions with humility and obedience. With such a temper of mind, aided by other requisite moral qualifications, and the promised assistance of the holy spirit, it may be expected that the internal and experimental evidence of the christian religion will become daily more convincing, and that most of those difficulties of which the proud and unteachable complain, will disappear. And still farther if to all these be added that diligent and patient inquiry which such a book as the Bible must require, from the reasons already stated, it will indeed appear to be an immense and invaluable treasury of heavenly knowledge, and containing the words of eternal life, will abundantly reward those who search it out and regulate their lives by it. Were the Bible a book that could be understood without labour and study those who now complain loudest of its difficulties, would most probably then have regarded it as trite, puerile and unnecessary—destitute of the elevation and sacred mysteriousness of a divine revelation; and, indeed, had such been the case, there might have been much reason to suspect its divine origin. For if we are encompassed with difficulties in the study of human and sensible beings, how wonderful would it be, if the knowledge of divine and spiritual things were of easier attainment. They are not so; and, therefore, as in other branches of knowledge, patient and diligent study is necessary to understand them.

Such an arrangement of things is admirably adapted to the condition of man, and to the motives by which he is actuated. The mind is pleased and profited by progressive knowledge. This diversifies the scene of human life which otherwise